

April 26, 1961

STRENGTHENING FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAS

Problem

To take effective measures for coping with the threat of Castro-Communism in the Western Hemisphere, in the light of the Cuban exiles' failure to overthrow Castro and restore freedom in Cuba.

Discussion

The failure of the recent attempt of Cuban exiles to end Castroism in Cuba by force of arms has tightened the grip of Castro's dictatorship. His perpetuation in power continues the operation of an important agency of Communist penetration and subversion in the countries of Latin America.

The United States is confronted by the problem of (1) turning back and defeating attempts to extend Castroism in this Hemisphere, and (2) restoring democratic government and effective national independence in Cuba. But we should not let our chagrin at the recent events in Cuba distract us from our long-term objective in Latin America.

That objective is to build a free, prosperous, and stable Hemisphere. This requires economic development, social progress, and a greater part in the processes of government for the mass of the people in the countries of Latin America. We want to create on their part a greater stake in and commitment to the organized society in which they live.

Significant

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Significant progress towards the basic United States objective will take time. It will require effort in the Latin American countries and assistance from outside. During the period in which this work of construction and development is undertaken and carried out, it will be necessary to maintain in Latin America those conditions of peace and order in which the hard work of progress can take place.

In Cuba, a totalitarian dictatorship is in power. Here we are confronted with a threshold question: What is the nature and immediacy of the threat posed by the Castro regime -- is it such a clear and present danger to the safety of the United States as to require emergency action including the use of force? Or is that regime a painful and infecting "thorn in the flesh, rather than a dagger pointed at the heart?" The two situations are different, warranting different responses, and indeed requiring, from the legal and political point of view, different responses.

The Castro regime today constitutes an intrusion of Soviet Communism into the Western Hemisphere. It does not at this time threaten armed attack against the United States. While the conclusion is not so clear, it apparently does not presently threaten such attack against any of the American republics either. It does, however, threaten them with Communist penetration, subversion, and the establishment of further totalitarian regimes.

At the time of the Cuban exiles' landings, the situation was not considered such as to require the action of United States armed forces in a direct effort to overthrow Castro. In commenting on the landings, the President said April 21: "Any

unilateral

unilateral armed intervention in the absence of an external attack upon ourselves or an ally would have been contrary to our traditions and to our international obligations." The situation does not appear to have changed so materially in the intervening period as to require a different conclusion now.

In the absence of such an attack, we are bound by the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of American States and by the rules of international law to refrain from a unilateral resort to the use of armed force. For the United States to break, as the result of deliberate calculation, these fundamental treaty and other international obligations, would be destructive of our position in this Hemisphere, and would have grave effects world-wide.

We should, of course, engage in a continuing reassessment of the situation so that, if we should at any time change our estimate, we could then take measures accordingly.

Given the above assessment of the situation at the present time, we should pursue in relation to Cuba a variety of measures designed to encourage anti-Castro elements, to make the maintenance of its rule more difficult for the Castro regime, and to prepare the way for the eventual restoration of freedom and independence to Cuba. But it must be remembered that these measures are subordinate to and must be designed to fit the context of a greatly enlarged and speeded up program for social and economic development and progress in Latin America at large. It is therefore important to avoid measures in regard to Cuba which would (a) tend to interfere with the carrying-out of the overall United States program in Latin America when gradual

but

but steady progress was being made, or (b) operate in practice to involve the United States in a resort to forcible measures at a time when the actual situation was not such as to call for such action.

It must be recognized that this approach will take time, especially with respect to Cuba.

Recommendations:

1. That the United States reiterate its firm guaranty under Article 3 of the Rio Treaty to meet an armed attack against any of the American republics, which the treaty provides "shall be considered as an attack against all."

2. That a coordinated program be developed against Communist infiltration and subversion in the American republics, including a system of surveillance in the Caribbean to identify and frustrate armed assistance from Cuba to subversive movements in other countries.

3. That further economic pressures be applied against the Castro regime, including controls available under the Trading-with-the-Enemy Act, cessation of imports, and of remaining exports.

4. That a stepped-up program of information and propaganda be directed at Cuba and the other American republics; this would emphasize our liberal aspirations and our efforts at Latin American development, and would present tangible measures which the United States contemplates to assist the Cuban people and economy when Cuba is again free.

5. That we move ahead with all urgency on the Alianza Para Progreso as the basic economic and social program for Latin America designed to produce

progress

progress, freedom and stability in the Hemisphere.

6. Procedures: Most of the above recommendations may be pursued unilaterally. It is important, however, to build a vividly perceived sense of community among the nations of the Hemisphere in pursuit of our objectives. To this end we should

a. Intensify systematic consultation and exchange of views with Latin American governments both in Washington and in the capitals.

b. To the extent possible, we should secure the cooperation and joint action of other nations of the Hemisphere in pursuit of the courses of action outlined above.

c. It would of course be desirable to have OAS action on these lines, but only if careful canvass of the situation indicates that meaningful action can be obtained. On the other hand, resort to the OAS which fails to achieve substantial action will be generally construed as a diplomatic defeat for the U.S.